REMARKS

Claims 1-148 are pending.

Claims 1-148 stand rejected.

Claims 4, 18, 31, 43, 53, 55, 58, 64, 77, 78, 97, 105, 113 and 128 have been canceled, without prejudice.

Claims 1, 5, 15, 19, 28, 32, 40, 44, 52, 54, 61, 74, 79, 87, 94, 98-100, 104, 106-108, 110, 114, 125, 147 and 148 have been amended. Support for these amendments can be found throughout the specification and drawings, as originally filed.

This response is submitted in response to a final office action and is deemed to place the application in a condition for allowance, or alternatively, in better condition for appeal.

The Applicants wish to express their appreciation to the Examiner for the courtesies extended to the Applicants' attorney, Preston Smirman, during a personal interview held at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on April 18, 2006.

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The Examiner asserted that some of the cited references in the previously submitted Information Disclosure Statement fail to meet the requirements of 37 C.F.R. §1.98.

The Applicants respectfully traverse the Examiner's refusal to consider these particular cited references.

The Applicants provided all available information concerning these particular cited references, including, where available, publisher, author(s), title, relevant pages of

the publication, date, and place of publication. Due to the nature of these particular cited references, not all of the aforementioned informational categories were available for each and every one of these particular cited references. The Applicants provided the greatest amount of information concerning each and every one of these particular cited references under the circumstances, and thus respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider his position and acknowledge his consideration of these particular cited references in the next official action.

DRAWINGS

The Examiner stated that the previously filed drawings are acceptable.

35 USC §112, FIRST PARAGRAPH REJECTION

Claims 124 and 138-148 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement.

The Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, rejection of claims 124 and 138-148.

The Applicants clearly disclosed that the substrate of the present invention can be comprised of several different types of plastic materials, as follows in Paragraph [0241]:

> [0241] Referring to FIG. 2, and without being bound to a particular theory of the operation of the present invention, it is intended that support film be releaseably secured to a ***substrate 12, such as but not limited to plastic materials, such as thermoplastics, thermosets, and combinations thereof.*** It should be appreciated that multiple substrate layers may be employed in the practice of the present invention. By way of a non-limiting example, additional substrates, such as but not limited to thermoplastic olefins (TPO), may be adhered to the back surface of

substrate 12, for example, by way of injection molding...(Emphasis added).

The types of plastic materials useful in connection with the present invention, including ABS, were set forth in paragraph [0003], as follows:

> [0003] In an effort to decrease automobile weight and increase energy efficiency, many automobile manufacturers are employing automobile parts that are fabricated from lightweight materials, ***such as plastic materials (e.g., thermoplastics and thermosets). One such class of plastic materials is generally known as thermoplastic polyolefins (TPO's), such as various grades of polyethylene or polypropylene. Another such class would consist of ABS or ABS/polycarbonate blends.*** (Emphasis added).

Therefore, the Applicants contend that the claims 124 and 138-148 comply with the written description requirement.

Accordingly, the Applicants submit that the 35 U.S.C. §112, first paragraph, rejection of claims 124 and 138-148 has been overcome.

35 USC §102(b) REJECTION

Claims 1, 3-15, 17-28, 30-40, 42-61, 63-74, 76-86, 94, 96-110, 112-123, 125, and 127-137 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,330,352 to Grimes et al.

The Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection of claims 1, 3-15, 17-28, 30-40, 42-61, 63-74, 76-86, 94, 96-110, 112-123, 125, and 127-137. The Applicants note that claims 4, 18, 31, 43, 53, 55, 58, 64, 77, 78, 105, 113 and 128 have been canceled, without prejudice, and therefore the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection against them is moot.

The law is clear that anticipation requires that a single prior art reference disclose each and every limitation of the claim sought to be rejected. 35 U.S.C. 102(b).

The law is also clear that a claim in dependent form shall be construed to incorporate all the limitations of the claim to which it refers. 35 U.S.C. 112, fourth paragraph.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 1 to recite, among other things, a laminate system, comprising: a thermoformable polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F; and a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque; wherein the support film and the polymeric substrate are subjected to a thermoforming process; wherein the support film releasably adheres to and supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 15 to recite, among other things, a laminate system, comprising: a thermoformable polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F; a release layer; and a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque, wherein the release layer is disposed between the support film and the polymeric substrate; wherein the support film, polymeric substrate, and release layer are subjected to a thermoforming process; wherein the support film supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without

admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 28 to recite, among other things, a laminate system, comprising: a thermoformable polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F; a release layer; and a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque, wherein the release layer is disposed between the support film and the polymeric substrate; wherein the support film, polymeric substrate, and release layer are subjected to a thermoforming process; wherein the release layer is releasably adhered to the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process, wherein the release layer is operable to be peeled away from the polymeric substrate; wherein the support film supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 40 to recite, among other things, a thermoformable laminate system, comprised of: a polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F, wherein the support film is operable to releasably adhere to and support a polymeric substrate during a thermoforming process; a paint or color-containing film system; and a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque, wherein the paint or color-containing film system is disposed between the support film and the polymeric substrate; wherein the support film, polymeric substrate, and paint or color-containing film system are subjected to a thermoforming process; wherein the support film is releasably adhered to the paint or color-containing film system; wherein the support film supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 52 to recite, among other things, a thermoformable laminate system comprised of: a polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F, wherein the support film is operable to support a polymeric substrate during a thermoforming process; a paint or color-containing film system; an adhesive film system; and a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque, wherein the adhesive film system is disposed between the paint or color-containing film system and the polymeric substrate, wherein the paint or color-containing film system is disposed between the support film and the adhesive film system; wherein the support film, polymeric substrate, paint or color-containing film system, and adhesive film system are subjected to a thermoforming process; wherein the support film is releasably adhered to the paint or color-containing film system; wherein the support film supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 61 to recite, among other things, a method for forming a laminate system, comprising: providing a thermoformable polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F; providing a release layer; providing a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque, wherein the release layer is disposed between the support film and the polymeric substrate; and wherein the release layer is releasably adhered to the polymeric substrate during a

thermoforming process, wherein the release layer is operable to be peeled away from the polymeric substrate; wherein the support film supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 74 to recite, among other things, a method for forming a laminate system, comprising: providing a thermoformable polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F; providing a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque; providing a release layer, wherein the release layer is disposed between the support film and the polymeric substrate; and subjecting the support film, polymeric substrate, and release layer to a thermoforming process; wherein the support film supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process; wherein the release layer is operable to releasably adhere to the polymeric substrate, wherein the release layer is operable to be peeled away from the polymeric substrate.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 94 to recite, among other things, a method for forming a laminate system, comprising: providing a thermoformable polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F; providing a paint or color-containing film system; providing a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque, wherein the paint or color-containing film system is disposed between the support film and the polymeric substrate; and subjecting the support film, paint or color-

containing film system, and polymeric substrate to a thermoforming process; wherein the support film is releasably adhered to the paint or color-containing film system during the thermoforming process; wherein the support film supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 104 to recite, among other things, a method for forming a laminate system, comprising: providing a thermoformable polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F; providing a paint or color-containing film system; providing an adhesive film system; providing a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque, wherein the adhesive film system is disposed between the paint or color-containing film system and the polymeric substrate, wherein the paint or color-containing film system is disposed between the support film and the adhesive film system; and subjecting the support film, paint or color-containing film system, adhesive film system, and polymeric substrate to a thermoforming process; wherein the support film releasably adheres to the paint or color-containing film system during the thermoforming process; wherein the support film supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 110 to recite, among other things, a laminate system, comprising: a thermoformable polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F; and a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or

opaque; wherein the support film is releasably adhered to and supports the polymeric substrate during a thermoforming process.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 125 to recite, among other things, a method for forming a laminate system, comprising: providing a thermoformable polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F; providing a release layer; providing a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque, wherein the release layer is disposed between the support film and the polymeric substrate; and subjecting the support film, polymeric substrate, and release layer to a thermoforming process; wherein the release layer is releasably adhered to the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process; wherein the support film supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process.

Grimes et al. teach no such structure or methodology of the present invention, as claimed in any of independent claims 1, 15, 28, 40, 52, 61, 74, 94, 104, 110, and 125, or the claims dependent therefrom.

Specifically, Grimes et al. fail to teach, among other things, that the various materials, including at least the support film and the substrate, are subjected to a thermoforming process, or that the polymeric support film releasably adheres to and supports the translucent or opaque polymeric substrate during a thermoforming process, as recited in the pending independent claims, as amended.

The Applicants submit concurrently herewith a Rule 132 Declaration executed by Thaddeus W. Klimek, which clearly establishes that the claimed polymeric substrates of

the present invention, e.g., thermoplastic polyolefin (i.e., TPO), ABS, and combinations thereof, are well known in the art to be translucent or opaque, as opposed to transparent.

The Examiner correctly noted that Grimes et al. is silent with respect to the tensile strength of the support layer at 300°F.

As previously noted in Applicants' earlier response, the carrier film 4 taught by Grimes et al. does not correspond to the polymeric support film of the instant invention, as it does not and cannot perform the same function thereof. Reiterating, the carrier film 4 is merely used a means for carrying, not supporting, the protective release coating 5 to the metallized transfer laminate 10. The carrier film 4 is then removed from the laminate prior to the laminate coming into contact with the intended substrate (e.g., see Figs. 3 and 4). Thus, it remains unclear to the Applicants how the carrier film 4 can possibly perform a support function if it is removed prior to the affixation to the intended substrate. In fact, the carrier film 4 does not appear to perform any "support" function, and certainly does perform the support function of the support layer of the claimed invention.

Furthermore, and more importantly, Grimes et al. is completely silent with respect to the concept of thermoforming and there is certainly no reference therein mentioning that the carrier film 4 is involved with any type of thermoforming process. Assuming *arguendo* that Grimes et al. did teach that the laminate is to be thermoformed with a substrate, the carrier film 4 has already been removed by that stage, thus it cannot possibly perform a support function because it is not present. Regardless, Grimes et al. appear to only teach the use of pressure sensitive adhesives to affix the laminate to the

desired substrate. These transfer lamination processes are typically carried out at ambient temperatures, not at the temperatures typically encountered during conventional thermoforming processes.

Finally, and still more importantly, Grimes et al. does not teach that the substrate (i.e., element 1) is translucent or opaque, but rather that it is "substantially transparent," in contradistinction to the instant invention. For example, see Grimes et al. at column 2, lines 13-25, reproduced below:

> FIG. 1 shows the substantially transparent plastic film 1 which may be any conventional, substantially transparent and flexible film known to persons of ordinary skill in the art of fabricating decorative pressure sensitive products. ***The term "substantially transparent" as used herein is intended to encompass those plastic films which are transparent enough to allow a viewer to perceive the decorative effect generated by the metallic layer in the laminate of the present invention.*** The thickness of the film 1 can range from about 2 mils (0.05 mm.) to about 20 mils (0.5 mm.), and the film can be a homo- or copolymer of vinyl chloride (the preferred film material), a polyester resin, a cellulose resin, or the like. (Emphasis added).

Because claim 1 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at least the reasons stated above, claims 3 and 5-14, which depend from and further define claim 1, are likewise allowable. Because claim 15 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at least the reasons stated above, claims 17 and 19-27, which depend from and further define claim 15, are likewise allowable. Because claim 28 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at least the reasons stated above, claims 30 and 32-39, which depend from and further define claim 28, are likewise allowable. Because claim 40 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at least the reasons stated above, claims 42 and 44-51, which depend from and further define claim 40, are likewise allowable. Because claim 52 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at

least the reasons stated above, claims 54, 56, 57, 59 and 60, which depend from and further define claim 52, are likewise allowable. Because claim 61 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at least the reasons stated above, claims 63 and 65-73, which depend from and further define claim 61, are likewise allowable. Because claim 74 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at least the reasons stated above, claims 76 and 79-86, which depend from and further define claim 74, are likewise allowable. Because claim 94 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at least the reasons stated above, claims 96 and 98-103, which depend from and further define claim 94, are likewise allowable. Because claim 104 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at least the reasons stated above, claims 106-109, which depend from and further define claim 104, are likewise allowable. Because claim 110 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at least the reasons stated above, claims 112 and 114-123, which depend from and further define claim 110, are likewise allowable. Because claim 125 is allowable over Grimes et al. for at least the reasons stated above, claims 127 and 129-137, which depend from and further define claim 125, are likewise allowable.

Accordingly, the Applicants contend that the 35 U.S.C. 102(b) rejection of claims 1, 3, 5-15, 17, 19-28, 30, 32-40, 42, 44-52, 54, 56, 57, 59-61, 63, 65-74, 76, 79-86, 94, 96, 98-104, 106-110, 112, 114-123, 125, 127, and 129-137 has been overcome.

Furthermore, the Applicants submit that Grimes et al. do not render claims 1, 3, 5-15, 17, 19-28, 30, 32-40, 42, 44-52, 54, 56, 57, 59-61, 63, 65-74, 76, 79-86, 94, 96, 98-104, 106-110, 112, 114-123, 125, 127, and 129-137 obvious.

The standard for obviousness is that there must be some suggestion, either in the reference or in the relevant art, of how to modify what is disclosed to arrive at the

claimed invention. In addition, "[s]omething in the prior art as a whole must suggest the desirability and, thus, the obviousness, of making" the modification to the art suggested by the Examiner. *Uniroyal, Inc. v. Rudkin-Wiley Corp.*, 837 F.2d 1044, 1051, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1434, 1438 (Fed. Cir.), cert. denied, 488 U.S. 825 (1988). Although the Examiner may suggest the teachings of a primary reference could be modified to arrive at the claimed subject matter, the modification is not obvious unless the prior art also suggests the desirability of such modification. *In re Laskowski*, 871 F.2d 115, 117, 10 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1397, 1398 (Fed. Cir.1989). There must be a teaching in the prior art for the proposed combination or modification to be proper. *In re Newell*, 891 F.2d 899, 13 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1248 (Fed. Cir. 1989). If the prior art fails to provide this necessary teaching, suggestion, or incentive supporting the Examiner's suggested modification, the rejection based upon this suggested modification is error and must be reversed. *In re Bond*, 910 F.2d 831, 15 U.S.P.Q.2d (BNA) 1566 (Fed. Cir. 1990).

Grimes et al. do not suggest the various materials, including at least the support film and the substrate, are subjected to a thermoforming process, or that the polymeric support film releasably adheres to and supports the translucent or opaque polymeric substrate during a thermoforming process, as recited in the pending independent claims, as amended.

The Examiner correctly noted that Grimes et al. is silent with respect to the tensile strength of the support layer at 300°F.

Again, as previously noted in Applicants' earlier response, the carrier film 4 taught by Grimes et al. does not correspond to the support film of the instant invention, as it does not and cannot perform the same function thereof. Reiterating, the carrier

film 4 is merely used a means for carrying, not supporting, the protective release coating 5 to the metallized transfer laminate 10. As previously noted, the carrier film 4 is then removed from the laminate prior to the laminate coming into contact with the intended substrate (e.g., see Figs. 3 and 4). Thus, it remains unclear to the Applicants how the carrier film 4 can possibly perform a support function if it is removed prior to the affixation to the intended substrate. In fact, the carrier film 4 does not appear to perform any "support" function, and certainly does perform the support function of the support layer of the claimed invention.

Furthermore, and more importantly, Grimes et al. is completely silent with respect to the concept of thermoforming and there is certainly no reference therein mentioning that the carrier film 4 is involved with any type of thermoforming process. Assuming *arguendo* that Grimes et al. did teach that the laminate is to be thermoformed with a substrate, the carrier film 4 has already been removed by that stage, and thus it cannot possibly perform a support function because it is not present, and certainly cannot perform a support function during a thermoforming process. Regardless, Grimes et al. appear to only teach the use of pressure sensitive adhesives to affix the laminate to the desired substrate. As previously stated, these transfer lamination processes are typically carried out at ambient temperatures, not at the temperatures typically encountered during conventional thermoforming processes.

Finally, and still more importantly, Grimes et al. does not suggest that the substrate (i.e., element 1) is translucent or opaque, but rather the exact opposite, i.e., the substrate is "substantially transparent," in contradistinction to the instant invention.

Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art would not look to Grimes et al. for guidance

on the support film and laminate systems, or methods of forming the same, of the present invention, as presently claimed.

35 USC §103(a) REJECTION

Claims 1, 3-15, 17-28, 30-40, 42-61, 63-74, 76-86, 94, 98-110, 112-123, 125, and 127-137 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,330,352 to Grimes et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,518,786 to Johnson et al.

The Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection of claims 1, 3-15, 17-28, 30-40, 42-61, 63-74, 76-86, 94, 98-110, 112-123, 125, and 127-137. The Applicants note that claims 4, 18, 31, 43, 53, 55, 58, 64, 77, 78, 105, 113 and 128 have been canceled, without prejudice, and therefore the 35 U.S.C. §102(b) rejection against them is moot.

The Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 15, 28, 40, 52, 61, 74, 94, 104, 110, and 125 as previously described.

In the interests of expediting prosecution of the instant application, and without admission that any amendment is required, the Applicants have amended claim 87 to recite, among other things, a method for forming a laminate system, comprising: providing a thermoformable polymeric support film comprised of a material having a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F; providing a release layer; providing a surfacing film system; providing a polymeric substrate, wherein the polymeric substrate is translucent or opaque, wherein the surfacing film system is disposed between the release layer and the polymeric substrate, wherein the release layer is disposed

between the support film and the surfacing film system; and subjecting the support film, release layer, surfacing film system, and polymeric substrate to a thermoforming process; wherein the release layer is releasably adhered to the surfacing film system during the thermoforming process, wherein the release layer is operable to be peeled away from the surfacing film system; wherein the support film supports the polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process.

Grimes et al. does not disclose any such structure or methodology of the present invention, as claimed in any of independent claims 1, 15, 28, 40, 52, 61, 74, 87, 94, 104, 110, and 125, or the claims dependent therefrom.

Grimes et al. do not disclose or suggest that the various materials, including at least the support film and the substrate, are subjected to a thermoforming process, or that the support film releasably adheres to and supports the polymeric substrate during a thermoforming process, as recited in the pending independent claims, as amended.

The Examiner correctly noted that Grimes et al. is silent with respect to the tensile strength of the support layer at 300°F.

Again, as previously noted above, the carrier film 4 disclosed by Grimes et al. does not correspond to the support film of the instant invention, as it does not and cannot perform the same function thereof. Reiterating, the carrier film 4 is merely used a means for carrying, not supporting, the protective release coating 5 to the metallized transfer laminate 10. As noted, the carrier film 4 is then removed from the laminate prior to the laminate coming into contact with the intended substrate (e.g., see Figs. 3 and 4). Thus, it remains unclear to the Applicants how the carrier film 4 can possibly perform a support function if it is removed prior to the affixation to the intended

substrate. In fact, the carrier film 4 does not appear to perform any "support" function, and certainly does perform the support function of the support layer of the claimed invention.

Furthermore, and more importantly, Grimes et al. is completely silent with respect to the concept of thermoforming and there is certainly no reference therein mentioning that the carrier film 4 is involved with any type of thermoforming process. Assuming *arguendo* that Grimes et al. did disclose that the laminate is to be thermoformed with a substrate, the carrier film 4 has already been removed by that stage, and thus it cannot possibly perform a support function because it is not present, and certainly cannot perform a support function during a thermoforming process. Regardless, Grimes et al. appear to only disclose the use of pressure sensitive adhesives to affix the laminate to the desired substrate. As previously stated, these transfer lamination processes are typically carried out at ambient temperatures, not at the temperatures typically encountered during conventional thermoforming processes.

Finally, and still more importantly, Grimes et al. does not suggest that the substrate (i.e., element 1) is translucent or opaque, but rather the exact opposite, i.e., the substrate is "substantially transparent," in contradistinction to the instant invention.

The recitation of Johnson et al. does not cure the deficiencies in the disclosure of Grimes et al.

Specifically, while Johnson et al. may arguably disclose the use of a carrier sheet that may have a silicone coated release surface or a thin film of wax, which the Applicants do not concede, the fact remains that Johnson et al. fail to disclose or suggest, among other things, that the various materials, including at least the support

film and the substrate (wherein the support film has a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F), are subjected to a thermoforming process, and that the polymeric support film supports the translucent or opaque polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process, as recited in the pending independent claims, as amended.

Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art would not look to Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for guidance on the support film and laminate systems, or methods of forming the same, of the present invention, as presently claimed.

Because claim 1 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 3 and 5-14, which depend from and further define claim 1, are likewise allowable. Because claim 15 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 17 and 19-27, which depend from and further define claim 15, are likewise allowable. Because claim 28 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 30 and 32-39, which depend from and further define claim 28, are likewise allowable. Because claim 40 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 42 and 44-51, which depend from and further define claim 40, are likewise allowable. Because claim 52 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 54, 56, 57, 59 and 60, which depend from and further define claim 52, are likewise allowable. Because claim 61 is allowable over Grimes et

al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 63 and 65-73, which depend from and further define claim 61, are likewise allowable. Because claim 74 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 76 and 79-86, which depend from and further define claim 74, are likewise allowable. Because claim 94 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 96 and 98-103, which depend from and further define claim 94, are likewise allowable. Because claim 104 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 106-109, which depend from and further define claim 104, are likewise allowable. Because claim 110 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 112 and 114-123, which depend from and further define claim 110, are likewise allowable. Because claim 125 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Johnson et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 127 and 129-137, which depend from and further define claim 125, are likewise allowable.

Accordingly, the Applicants contend that the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection of claims 1, 3, 5-15, 17, 19-28, 30, 32-40, 42, 44-52, 54, 56, 57, 59-61, 63, 65-74, 76, 79-86, 94, 96, 98-104, 106-110, 112, 114-123, 125, 127, and 129-137 has been overcome.

35 USC §103(a) REJECTION

Claims 124 and 138-148 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being

unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,330,352 to Grimes et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,045,744 to Kobayashi et al.

The Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection of claims 124 and 138-148.

The Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 15, 28, 40, 52, 61, 74, 87, 94, 104, 110, and 125 as previously described.

As previously asserted, Grimes et al. does not disclose any such structure or methodology of the present invention, as claimed in any of independent claims 1, 15, 28, 40, 52, 61, 74, 87, 94, 104, 110, and 125, or the claims dependent therefrom.

Reiterating, Grimes et al. do not disclose or suggest that the various materials, including at least the support film and the substrate, are subjected to a thermoforming process, or that the polymeric support film releasably adheres to and supports the translucent or opaque polymeric substrate during a thermoforming process, as recited in the pending independent claims, as amended.

The recitation of Kobayashi et al. does not cure the deficiencies in the disclosure of Grimes et al.

Specifically, while Kobayashi et al. may arguably disclose that polyvinyl chloride, polyester, ABS resin, polypropylene, and polyethylene are known in the art as functionally equivalent materials for forming substrate layers upon which decorative layers are formed into decorative laminates, which the Applicants do not concede, the fact remains that Kobayashi et al. fail to disclose or suggest, among other things, that the various materials, including at least the support film and the substrate (wherein the support film has a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F), are subjected to a

thermoforming process, and that the polymeric support film supports the translucent or opaque polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process, as recited in the pending independent claims, as amended.

Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art would not look to Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for guidance on the support film and laminate systems, or methods of forming the same, of the present invention, as presently claimed.

Because claim 1 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 138, which depends from and further defines claim 1, is likewise allowable. Because claim 15 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 139, which depends from and further defines claim 15, is likewise allowable. Because claim 28 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 140, which depends from and further defines claim 28, is likewise allowable. Because claim 40 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 141, which depends from and further defines claim 40, is likewise allowable. Because claim 52 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 142, which depends from and further defines claim 52, is likewise allowable. Because claim 61 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 143, which depends

from and further defines claim 61, is likewise allowable. Because claim 74 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 144, which depends from and further defines claim 74, is likewise allowable. Because claim 87 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 145, which depends from and further defines claim 87, is likewise allowable. Because claim 94 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 146, which depends from and further defines claim 94, is likewise allowable. Because claim 104 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 147, which depends from and further defines claim 104, is likewise allowable. Because claim 110 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 148, which depends from and further defines claim 110, is likewise allowable. Because claim 125 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Kobayashi et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 124, which depends from and further defines claim 125, is likewise allowable.

Accordingly, the Applicants contend that the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection of claims 124 and 138-148 has been overcome.

35 USC §103(a) REJECTION

Claims 2, 16, 29, 41, 62, 75, 95, 111 and 126 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C.

§103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,330,352 to Grimes et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,725,712 to Spain et al.

The Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection of claims 2, 16, 29, 41, 62, 75, 95, 111 and 126.

The Applicants have amended independent claims 1, 15, 28, 40, 52, 61, 74, 94, 110, and 125 as previously described.

As previously asserted, Grimes et al. does not disclose any such structure or methodology of the present invention, as claimed in any of independent claims 1, 15, 28, 40, 52, 61, 74, 94, 110, and 125, or the claims dependent therefrom.

Reiterating, Grimes et al. do not disclose or suggest that the various materials, including at least the support film and the substrate, are subjected to a thermoforming process, or that the polymeric support film releasably adheres to and supports the translucent or opaque polymeric substrate during a thermoforming process, as recited in the pending independent claims, as amended.

The recitation of Spain et al. does not cure the deficiencies in the disclosure of Grimes et al.

Specifically, while Spain et al. may arguably disclose that it is known to employ a release backing over an adhesive layer in a decorative laminate, which the Applicants do not concede, the fact remains that Spain et al. fail to disclose or suggest, among other things, that the various materials, including at least the support film and the substrate (wherein the support film has a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F), are subjected to a thermoforming process, and that the polymeric support film supports the translucent or opaque polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process, as

recited in the pending independent claims, as amended.

Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art would not look to Grimes et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for guidance on the support film and laminate systems, or methods of forming the same, of the present invention, as presently claimed.

Because claim 1 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 2, which depends from and further defines claim 1, is likewise allowable. Because claim 15 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 16, which depends from and further defines claim 15, is likewise allowable. Because claim 28 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 29, which depends from and further defines claim 28, is likewise allowable. Because claim 40 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claims 41, which depends from and further defines claim 40, is likewise allowable. Because claim 61 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 62, which depends from and further defines claim 61, is likewise allowable. Because claim 74 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 75, which depends from and further defines claim 74, is likewise allowable. Because claim 94 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above,

claim 95, which depends from and further defines claim 94, is likewise allowable. Because claim 110 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 111, which depends from and further defines claim 110, is likewise allowable. Because claim 125 is allowable over Grimes et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 126, which depends from and further defines claim 125, is likewise allowable.

Accordingly, the Applicants contend that the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection of claims 2, 16, 29, 41, 62, 75, 95, 111, and 126 has been overcome.

35 USC §103(a) REJECTION

Claim 88 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,330,352 to Grimes et al. in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,518,786 to Johnson et al. and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,725,712 to Spain et al.

The Applicants respectfully traverse the 35 U.S.C. §103(a) rejection of claim 88.

The Applicants have amended independent claim 87 as previously described.

As previously asserted, Grimes et al. does not disclose any such structure or methodology of the present invention, as claimed in independent claim 87, or the claims dependent therefrom.

Reiterating, Grimes et al. do not disclose or suggest that the various materials, including at least the support film and the substrate, are subjected to a thermoforming process, or that the polymeric support film releasably adheres to and supports the translucent or opaque polymeric substrate during a thermoforming process, as recited in

the pending independent claim, as amended.

The recitation of Johnson et al. and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, do not cure the deficiencies in the disclosure of Grimes et al.

As previously noted, while Johnson et al. may arguably disclose the use of a carrier sheet that may have a silicone coated release surface or a thin film of wax, which the Applicants do not concede, the fact remains that Johnson et al. fail to disclose or suggest, among other things, that the various materials, including at least the support film and the substrate (wherein the support film has a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F), are subjected to a thermoforming process, and that the polymeric support film supports the translucent or opaque polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process, as recited in the pending independent claim, as amended.

Also as previously noted, while Spain et al. may arguably disclose that it is known to employ a release backing over an adhesive layer in a decorative laminate, which the Applicants do not concede, the fact remains that Spain et al. fail to disclose or suggest, among other things, that the various materials, including at least the support film and the substrate (wherein the support film has a tensile strength greater than 0.5 pli at 300°F), are subjected to a thermoforming process, and that the polymeric support film supports the translucent or opaque polymeric substrate during the thermoforming process, as recited in the pending independent claim, as amended.

Thus, one of ordinary skill in the art would not look to Grimes et al., Johnson et al., and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for guidance on the support film and laminate systems, or methods of forming the same, of the present invention, as presently claimed.

Because claim 87 is allowable over Grimes et al., Johnson et al., and/or Spain et al., either alone or in combination therewith, for at least the reasons stated above, claim 88, which depends from and further defines claim 87, is likewise allowable.

Accordingly, the Applicants contend that the 35 U.S.C. 103(a) rejection of claim 88 has been overcome.

CONCLUSION

In view of the foregoing, the Applicants respectfully requests reconsideration and reexamination of the Application. The Applicants respectfully submits that each item raised by Examiner in the Office Action of February 2, 2006 has been successfully traversed, overcome or rendered moot by this response. The Applicants respectfully submits that each of the claims in this Application is in condition for allowance and such allowance is earnestly solicited.

The Examiner is invited to telephone the Applicants' undersigned attorney at (248) 723-0487 if any unresolved matters remain.

Any needed extension of time is hereby requested with the filing of this document.

The Commissioner is authorized to charge any additional fees or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 08-2789.

Respectfully submitted,

HOWARD & HOWARD ATTORNEYS, P.C.

5/2/06
Date

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